



# Watertown Police Department

## AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE READERS

### CHAPTER 61Z



**General Order Number: 11-012**  
**Reference: IACP Model Policy**  
**Accreditation Standards:**

**Effective Date: 09/12/2011**  
**Revised Date:**

---

#### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers with guidelines on the proper use of license plate recognition (LPR) systems, also commonly known as license plate reader systems or ALPRS.

#### II. POLICY

The availability and use of LPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of productivity, effectiveness, and officer safety. It is the policy of the Watertown Police Department; the Agency, that all members abide by the guidelines set forth herein when using LPR systems.

#### III. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

**FOUO:** For Official Use Only

**LPR:** License Plate Recognition/License Plate Reader

**ALPR:** Automated License Plate Reader

**OCR:** Optical Character Recognition

**Read:** Digital images of license plates and vehicles and associated metadata (e.g., date, time, and geographic coordinates associated with the vehicle image capture) that are captured by the LPR system.

**Alert:** A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the LPR system receives a potential "hit" on a license plate.

**Hit:** A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency's "hot list" of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting investigation, or which has been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

**Hot list:** License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts that are regularly added to “hot lists” circulated among law enforcement agencies. Hot list information can come from a variety of sources, including stolen vehicle information from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), as well as national AMBER Alerts and Department of Homeland Security watch lists. Departments of motor vehicles can provide lists of expired registration tags, and law enforcement agencies can interface their own, locally compiled hot lists to the LPR system; e.g. Parking Ticket Scofflaw files. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency supported hot lists, users may also manually add license plate numbers to hot lists in order to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is “read” by the LPR system.

**Fixed LPR system:** LPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.

**Mobile LPR system:** LPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.

**Portable LPR system:** LPR cameras that are transportable and can be moved and deployed in a variety of venues as needed, such as a traffic barrel or speed radar sign.

#### IV. PROCEDURES

##### A. General

1. The use of LPR systems is restricted to public safety–related missions of this agency.
2. LPR systems and associated equipment and databases are authorized for official public safety purposes. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases, or data, may be subject to sanctions and/or disciplinary actions.
3. LPR systems and LPR data and associated media are the property of this agency and intended for use in conducting official business with limited exceptions noted elsewhere in this policy.

##### B. Administration

1. The Chief of Police shall designate an employee(s) with administrative oversight for LPR system deployment and operations that are responsible for the following:
  - a. Establishing protocols for access, collection, storage, and retention of LPR data and associated media files
  - b. Establishing protocols to preserve and document LPR reads and “alerts” or “hits” that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions
  - c. Establishing protocols to establish and ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the LPR system

- d. Ensuring the proper selection of the personnel approved to operate the LPR system and maintaining an adequate number of trainees;
  - e. Maintaining records identifying approved LPR deployments and documenting their results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to LPR usage
  - f. Authorizing any requests for LPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of the Watertown Police Department.
- 2. Designated, trained personnel shall check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Any equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall be removed from service until deficiencies have been corrected and a written report shall be made to the Administrative Oversight Duties Officer no later than the end of a regular tour of duty.
  - 3. LPR systems repairs, hardware or software, shall be made by agency authorized sources.

#### C. License Plate Reader System Usage

- 1. LPR operation and access to LPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only.
- 2. Only officers who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the LPR systems shall be permitted to use it.
- 3. At the start of each shift users must ensure that the LPR system has been updated with the most current hot lists available.
- 4. LPR Alerts/Hits: Prior to initiation of the stop:
  - a. Visually verify that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number run by the LPR system, including both alphanumeric characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
  - b. Always verify the current status of the plate through dispatch or MDT query prior to effecting a stop of the vehicle **when circumstances allow.**
  - c. In the event of a “hit” while operating the ALPR unit mounted on a Police Department owned vehicle, the officer operating the vehicle shall at all times exercise care and caution in reversing direction to follow or apprehend a “hit” traveling in the opposite direction. In reversing direction in traffic, officers shall make use of police warning lights and the use of an audible warning device or siren when circumstance warrant the use of said devices. i.e. reversing direction into oncoming traffic.
- 5. In each case in which an alert or a hit is triggered, the user should record the disposition of the alert and the hit into the LPR system (ACCEPT or REJECT)
- 6. Hot lists may be updated manually if the user enters a specific plate into the LPR system and wants to be alerted when that plate is located.

7. Searches of historical data within the LPR system should be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.

D. LPR Data Sharing and Dissemination

LPR data should be considered FOUO (for Official Use Only) and can be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes:

1. When LPR data are disseminated outside the agency, it should be documented in a secondary dissemination log.
2. Information sharing among agencies should be dictated in accordance with MOUs (memoranda of understanding) or established departmental policies.

- E. Retention of LPR data may change from time to time. Those Officers (s) with Administrative Oversight of the LPR units, shall retain all recorded data at the written direction from the Chief of Police, and in compliance with all written directives issued by the Criminal History Systems Bureau.